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Carole Davis
Co-Executive Secretary of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee
Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
U.S. Department of Agriculture
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1034
Alexandria, VA 22302

Dear Ms. Davis:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments regarding the 2010 Dietary Guidelines. Since 1980, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans have served as the basis for all Federal nutrition policies and nutrition education programs. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans have been reviewed and published six times since 1980 and every revision has included guidance about beverage alcohol. While some dietary guidance statements have been substantially revised and edited as nutritional science has evolved (e.g., fat, grains, etc), the dietary guideline statement about beverage alcohol has remained essentially unchanged except for altering the wording from "alcohol" to "alcoholic beverages".

Overtime, the supporting messages regarding the potential health risks and benefits of beverage alcohol have become more specific and tailored. However, neither the definition of "moderate" drinking for men and women (1-2 drinks per day) nor the definition of a standard drink have changed since they were first introduced more than 20 years ago. Unfortunately, efforts to communicate about the alcohol guideline have been less than optimal. *As a health professional, I believe it's important to educate individuals about what makes a standard drink in order to ensure adults who choose to drink, do so in moderation and responsibly.*

The current definition of a standard drink (one drink is defined as 12 fl. oz of regular beer, 5 fl oz. of wine (12 percent alcohol), 1.5 fl oz of 80-proof distilled spirits) would be clearer if it also stated that each of these standard drinks contains the same amount of alcohol-0.6 fluid ounces. The following definition would provide the clearest information to help consumers understand and make responsible choices about beverage alcohol:

A standard drink consists of: 12 fluid ounces of regular beer (5 percent alcohol) 5 fluid ounces of wine (12 percent alcohol), 1.5 fluid ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits (40 percent alcohol). Each standard drink contains 0.6 fluid ounces of alcohol

Nutrition education needs to include discussions about beverage alcohol consumption from both a caloric and health perspective. Moderate beverage alcohol consumption has been defined by the Dietary Guidelines for more than twenty years and should not be avoided as topic of discussion by health professionals. As the topic of beverage alcohol is explored by health practitioners and their patients, awareness and knowledge of potential benefits and harms will grow. It is important to have clear information available to both the health professional and the consumer so informed choices can be made that will be promote healthy lifestyles for all.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Marianne Smith Edge".

Marianne Smith Edge, M.S., R.D., LD
President, MSE & Associates, LLC
Past President, American Dietetic Association